

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 SAM-01 IO-14 DRC-01 /091 W

----- 122347

O P 310605Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5653

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5732

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, JA

SUBJECT: CURRENT STATE OF ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS

REF: SEOUL 5726

1. KOREAN PRESS IS HEADLINING PRESIDENT PARK'S AUGUST 30 MEETING WITH JAPANESE AMBASSADOR USHIROKU. PRESS INDICATES THAT CONTENTS OF TALKS HAVE NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY REVEALED. HOWEVER, STORIES ATTRIBUTED TO UNNAMED SOURCES INDICATE THAT PRESIDENT PARK IS BELIEVED TO HAVE CONVEYED ROKG'S STRONG VIEWS ON NEED FOR JAPANESE COOPERATION IN INVESTIGATION OF ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT AND DEATH OF MRS. PARK.

2. IN ADDITION, PRESS REPORTS THAT PRESIDENT PARK TOOK A STRONG POSITION WITH REGARD TO ANTI-ROK ACTIVITIES BY CHOSEN SOREN AND JAPANESE PUBLIC STATEMENTS, MOST RECENTLY THAT OF FOREIGN MINISTER KIMURA CONCERNING NORTH KOREAN THREAT TO ROK. PRESS ALSO SPECULATES THAT PRESIDENT GAVE USHIROKU VEILED ULTIMATUM WITH REGARD TO FUTURE COURSE OF ROK-JAPANESE RELATIONS. FORIENG MINISTER KIM DONG JO WHO ATTENDED MEETING IS QUOTED AS STATING THE ROKG IS FACING THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH "GRAVE RESOLUTION AND
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READINESS."

3. DESPITE PRESS DICLAIMERS THAT CONTENTS OF PRESIDENT'S TALKS NOT REVEALED, IT CLEAR THAT PRESS FAIRLY ACCURATELY BRIEFED BY GOVERNMENT SOURCES ON SUBSTANCE OF PRESIDENT'S DISCUSSION AND GIVEN SIGNAL TO EMPHASIZE SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION AND DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS. PRESS HAS NOT YET REFERRED TO CHARGE'S MEETING WITH FONMIN (REFTEL) IN CONNECTION WITH APPROACH TO JAPANESE.

4. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH EMBOFFS, SENIOR ROK GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS POINT OUT THAT SITUATION IS "TENSE" BUT ARE CAREFUL TO STATE THAT ROK HAS SO FAR MADE NO EXPLICIT THREAT TO BREAK OFF RELATIONS WITH GOJ. THEY STRESS THAT ROKG AT THIS POINT IS PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN SECURING FULL JAPANESE COOPERATION IN INVESTIGATION OF THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION PLOT. AT SAME TIME, THESE OFFICIALS ALSO STRESS NECESSITY OF GOJ ACTION TO CONTROL CHOSEN SOREN ACTIVITIES AND NEED FOR JAPANESE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE THREE JAPANESE RESIDENTS (THE YOSHII'S, KIM HO RYONG), WHO ROKG BELIEVE ARE CLEARLY LINKED TO ASSASSINATION PLOT.

5. ROKG SENIOR OFFICIALS TAKE LINE THAT IF JAPANESE COOPERATION ALONG ABOVE LINES IS NOT FORTHCOMING, THE CONSEQUENCES IN TERMS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES ARE NOT PREDICTABLE AND STEPS AGAINST JAPANES COULD NOT BE RULED OUT.

6. IN ADDITION TO FORMAL VIEWS EXPRESSED BY ROKG OFFICIALS FOR THE RECORD, IT IS CLEAR THAT ROKG IS, IN ONLY SLIGHTLY DISGUISED FASHION, WARNING GOJ OF DRASTIC ACTION IN EVENT JAPANESE DO NOT MAKE SOME GESTURE ALONG LINES PRESIDENT PARK WANTS. DAILY PRESS REPORTS ON POSSIBILITY OF SUSPENSION OR SEVERING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ARE OBVIOUSLY INSPIRED. AND WE HAVE GOTTEN SOME INDICATIONS, AS YET UNCONFIRMED, THAT ROKG IS ALSO SIGNALLING INFORMALLY TO JAPAN THAT ANY MAJOR BREAK IN GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS MIGHT ALSO INVOLVE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE TWO
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COUNTRIES.

7. COMMENT: PRESIDENT PARK'S INVOLVEMENT AND INCREASED ROKG PUBLIC PRESSURE ON GOJ MARKS NEW, MORE SERIOUS STAGE IN ANTI-JAPANESE CAMPAIGN. PRESIDENT PARK HAS NOW ENGAGED HIS PERSONAL PRESTIGE IN THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE GOJ, THUS GREATLY INCREASING THE STAKES. PRESIDENT PARK SEEMS DETER-

MINED TO PROVE TO JAPANESE THAT HE MEANS BUSINESS.

8. SO FAR, ROKG OFFICIALS HAVE HINTED AT NO SPECIFIC TIME FRAME FOR RESOLUTION OF THE IMPASSE WITH THE GOJ, BUT WE APPEAR AT A MINIMUM TO BE IN FOR A PERIOD OF DEEP CONFRONTATION. AND WITH PRESIDENT PARK NOW PUBLICLY INVOLVED, THE EVENTUAL RISK OF A MAJOR MOVE AGAINST JAPAN, IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY JAPANESE CONCESSION, IS SIGNIFICANTLY HEIGHTENED.
ERICSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, ASSASSINATION, POLITICAL SITUATION, INVESTIGATIONS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SEOUL05732
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740242-0392
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974081/aaaaaaku.tel
Line Count: 126
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SEOUL 5726
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31 JUL 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <26 MAR 2003 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CURRENT STATE OF ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, KS, JA, (PARK CHUNG HEE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005